The Theosophical FORUM

JUNE 1902

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ISSUED MONTHLY

VOL. 8 NO. 2

Flushing

New York

Ten Cents a Copy One Dollar Yearly

MIND

PSYCHOLOGY — SCIENCE
METAPHYSICS — PHILOSOPHY
OCCULTISM — RELIGION

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$2.00 a year. 20c. a copy.

Issued monthly by the ALLIANCE PUBLISHING COMPANY, WINDSOR ARCADE, 569 FIFTH AVE., NEW YORK.

FULL REPORT

OF THE

EIGHTH ANNUAL CONVENTION

OF THE

THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AMERICA.

PRICE, TEN CENTS.

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Entered at the Post Office at Flushing, N. Y., as second-class matter, April. 20, 1901

THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM

VOL. 8. JUNE, 1902 No. 2

AMEN RA.

Hail to thee, Lord God of Law,
Thee, whose shrine none ever saw;
God of Gods, God Chepera,
Sailing in thy boat along,
By whose word the great gods are.
Thee we hail in song;
Atmu, maker of mankind,
Forms to all the men that be,
Color and variety,
By his fiat are assigned.
Unto him the poor men cry,
And he helps them in distress;
Kind of heart is he to all
Who upon him call,
God Almighty to deliver
Him that humble is, and meek,
From the great ones who oppress,
Judging ever
'Twixt the strong and weak.

Ancient Egyptian Hymn.

PHYSIOLOGISTS AND THE SOUL.

We saw in the April THEOSOPHICAL FORUM that physiologists consider subconscious mind an established fact, and that it is becoming accepted by the medical profession quite generally as a valuable therapeutic agent. In so far as subconscious action is related to the physical organism in its control of nutrition, secretions and other automatic functions of the physical economy, resulting in the cure of disease, we may safely conclude that physiologists are dealing with the astral pure and simple. But there are many kinds of evidence of subconsciousness, and where the line of demarcation should be drawn between the astral and the soul or ego, is sometimes perplexing in our limitations. Much interesting evidence and discussion of our subject may be found in "*Telepathy and the Subliminal Self,*" published in 1897, by Dr. R. Osgood Mason, member of the New York Academy of Medicine. Dr. Mason studies intelligently and carefully the whole psychical field, so far as it is known, his examination and experiments extending much farther than those of the authorities previously quoted. He devotes the first part of his book to hypnotism, of which he says, "No department of psychical research is exciting so widespread an interest. From the remotest periods of human history certain peculiar and unusual conditions of mind have been observed, during which words have been uttered sometimes conveying knowledge of events taking place at a distance, sometimes foretelling future events and sometimes warning, instructing, commanding." About 1773 Mesmer began curing disease by magnets and later by making passes over the patient and producing a mesmeric sleep. During this sleep use was made of suggestion. In 1842 Braid, an English surgeon, discovered that the mesmeric sleep could be accomplished by gazing steadily at a fixed brilliant object: he introduced the word hypnotism, which is now in common use. But scientists looked upon such experiments with disfavor; and it was not until 1877, when Charcot began his experiments in Paris, lending the influence of his great name to the study, that it came to be considered a legitimate field of scientific investigation.

Many hundred cases of remarkable cures by the early mesmerists are recorded. Dr. Mason gives a number of very interesting

examples illustrating the power of many operators, some of them from the "willing game," which attracted considerable interest at one time. Of this part of his subject he considers the following points well established:—"The reality of the hypnotic condition; the increased and remarkable power of suggestion over the subject; the usefulness of hypnotism as a therapeutic agent; and the perfect reality and natural, as contrasted with supernatural, character of many wonderful phenomena." He admits that "the exact nature of the influence is not known, nor the nature of the rapport between the hypnotizer and the subject." He asserts that, "entirely supernormal perception on the part of some individuals is a well established fact," and cites in proof of the position many interesting examples from Egyptian, Grecian and Biblical authorities down to the present time, showing that a belief in supernormal perception is apparent in the history of every ancient nation. He holds there is abundant evidence of visual perception independent of the physical organs of sight, but what the exact nature or method of this supernormal vision is may not be absolutely settled any more than the exact nature of light, electricity or of life, though of the fact itself in any of these cases there is no doubt. But he is certain that it is "a perfectly natural condition developed by a few though dormant in most." He finds the faculty is most likely to appear in a condition of abstraction, when the mind is acting without the restraint and guidance of the usual consciousness—in other words in concentration—and reaches its most perfect exercise when the body becomes inactive and the mind acts entirely independently of its usual manifesting organs—a condition which is not unfamiliar to theosophists—proving that the mind is capable of intelligent action apart from the brain and the whole material organism.

Of a double personality Dr. Mason argues that, thought in the empirical psychology of the past the unity of the human personality has been considered settled beyond all controversy, certain facts have been observed which, unless they can be interpreted to mean something different from their obvious import, "make strongly against the unquestioned oneness of the human personality." He cites Charcot's experiments and those of others, and the cases of common knowledge occurring in our midst, in proof of a divided or secondary personality. In some of the cases recorded, a few

of which occurred under his own observation, the differing personalities extend to three and four and even five in number, and yet each personality is distinct from all the others; the earlier ones having no knowledge of those which came after, though the later ones have knowledge of the earlier ones, but only as they might have knowledge of any other person. A memory of past births may have some relation to such phenomena, as in the case of Prof. Flournoy's remarkable subject, Mlle Hélène, but our author gives no hint of ever having heard of reincarnation—a loss to him and his readers, since this knowledge might have been of material assistance in his speculations.

In commenting on several cases which he cites, he says:—"The four cases here briefly outlined represent both sexes, two distinct nationalities and widely varying conditions in life. In each case one or more personalities crop out, so to speak, come to the surface, and become the conscious, active, ruling personality, distinct from the original self, having entirely different mental, moral and even physical characteristics; different tastes and different sentiments and opinions; personalities entirely unknown to the original self, which no one acquainted with the original self had any reason to suppose existed in connection with that organization." Without staying here to elucidate the law, which he thinks "probably underlies the mental state described, and which, if it could be clearly defined, would be of very great value," he seeks a further clue to it in an examination of somnambulism, dreams and automatism—automatic writing, drawing, painting, planchette writing and crystal-gazing—giving several well attested examples illustrating each phase of the subject. The phenomenon of somnambulism has been examined exhaustively and it need only be noted here that in many cases on record it discloses the double personality. With regard to dreams, the author says that, although authorities differ greatly upon most points with regard to them, there is tolerable unanimity among all writers, namely, the absence in dreams of the normal acts and processes of volition and especially of the faculty of attention, and this, he finds is "exactly the condition which is conducive to the more or less perfect emergence and activity of the subliminal self, under whatever circumstances it occurs."

In considering automatic writing our author has much to say

about the planchette which was quite the fashion a quarter of a century ago. Not many could get much more than an intelligible sentence now and then from the little machine, but a few got very surprising results, quite equal to any so-called spiritualistic communications; the skeptics as usual cried fraud; spiritualists claimed spirits were writing; and Dr. Carpenter's theory of "unconscious cerebration" was unsuccessfully invoked to explain the wonder. Dr. Mason says:—"From a physical standpoint planchette performances are simply automatic writing and drawing. To deny the automatic character of the movements of planchette at this day is simply absurd. That writing can be produced with it voluntarily no one doubts, but that it is generally produced automatically, that is, without the choice or control of the writers, and without their knowledge of what is being written, it would be waste of time here to attempt to prove; the theory of fraud is untenable, and the real question at issue is the psychical one, namely, whence come the messages which it brings?"

In giving examples from his own experience and others, the author confines himself mostly to such writings as brought information unknown either to the writer or to any person present, and concludes that in thought transference and in the subliminal self, "which has more subtle means of securing knowledge," and in these alone, may be found an adequate explanation of the wonderful instrument. Among its performances there is one which has attracted little or no attention and that only so far as it required special treatment to decipher otherwise intelligible messages—it is merely mentioned by our author—but which will be found of no inconsiderable importance when we come to consider the astral plane as well as the astral consciousness, affording as it does such exact corroboration of the astral sphere with its unbalanced forces and its reversal of what it reflects.

It is found that the little toy in the hands of beginners and especially with children, the latter having surely little aptitude and no purpose in manipulating the answers of the oracle, has the surprising habit of producing what is called "mirror writing," as it can be read only by holding it before a mirror, the messages being written from right to left. This is an unaccountable freak to the ordinary observer, but it is to be expected of immature and inexperienced per-

sons with minds unused to translate by reversing astral reflections, writing them down just as they appear. This is a strong indication that some, if not all, of the information communicated by the subconscious personality is obtained from the astral plane and not from the minds of others, as we are prone to believe; and more obviously is this the case where the persons present at seances are ignorant of the facts related, which are verified later perhaps by some one in another hemisphere, although distance is no obstacle to mind reading, notwithstanding which, however, spiritualistic believers assume without hesitation that if no one at hand has knowledge of the subject matter of the communication it must of necessity be given by "spirits."

Continuing the subject of automatic messages much might be said of crystal-gazing. Crystal parties have been quite a fad in certain social circles in Manhattan and Brooklyn the past season, and strange results have been obtained in some instances. Visualization is by no means an uncommon method of automatism. The crystal and other objects have been used from the earliest times to produce visions and for divination and prophecy. We find frequent reference to them in the Hebrew Scriptures: of Joseph's silver cup when found in Benjamin's sack the steward asks, "Is not this the cup in which my lord drinketh and whereby indeed he divineth?" A mirror, a glass of water or wine, or of any glistening substance, will answer the purpose, as do Mesmer's and Charcot's metallic disks; it is not the thing looked at that produces the effect, but the concentration of thought and vision bringing about a sort of self-hypnotism, and naturally some surprising astral reflections are seen.

Dr. Mason's chapter on Phantasms is in line with occult teaching. He is convinced that the subliminal self is separable from the physical personality; that it can leave the body and journey to a distance of many miles, and be recognized by and hold conversations with friends and others. He relates some well attested cases, which he accepts as establishing these points, and then says:—"Accepting these statements as true, how can they be explained? The theories or hypotheses which have been advanced are:—(1) A vibratory medium analagous to the universal ether. (2) An effluence of some sort emanating from the person. (3) A sixth sense. (4) A duplex personality or subliminal self." All of these theories are

very suggestive and his elucidation of them extremely interesting and instructive, but space will not allow anything approaching a fair synopsis of his arguments. In concluding this division of his subject, he says in part:

"It has been demonstrated by experiment after experiment carefully made by competent persons that sensations, ideas, information, and mental pictures can be transferred from one mind to another without the aid of speech, sight, hearing, touch, or any of the ordinary methods of communicating such information or impressions. That is, Telepathy is a fact, and mind communicates with mind through channels other than the ordinary use of the senses.

"It has been demonstrated that in the hypnotic condition, in ordinary somnambulism, in the dreams and visions of ordinary sleep, in reverie, and in various other subjective conditions, the mind may perceive scenes and events at the moment transpiring at such a distance away or under such physical conditions as to render it impossible that knowledge of these scenes and events could be obtained by means of the senses acting in their usual manner. That is, mind under some circumstances *sees* without the use of the physical organ of sight.

"Again, it has been demonstrated that some persons can voluntarily project the mind—some mind—some centre of intelligence or independent mental activity, clothed in a recognizable form, a distance of one, a hundred, or a thousand miles, and it can there make itself known and recognized, perform acts, and even carry on a conversation with the person to whom it was sent. That is, mind can *act* at a distance from, and independent of, the physical body and the organs through which it usually manifests itself."

The reader will please observe that the preceding three paragraphs are not taken from Eastern Occult literature; they reflect what is fast becoming New York up to date science; the writer is not giving an account of the appearance of a Mahatma to Col. Olcott at midnight in a New York Hotel, but merely relating similar incidents, and describing powers comparable to an Adept's, which he tells you "are developed in a few, but dormant in most." So that occultists differ from him only in saying that these powers are potential in *all.*

One word more from our esteemed author. In the last chapter of his book, in speaking of "the relation of automatism to the religious chiefs of the world," Dr. Mason makes a suggestion which demands more than "a passing consideration," though he introduces the subject in that modest way. He says:—"As prominent examples of those founders of religion we will briefly notice Moses, Zoroaster, Mahomet and Swedenborg. Each either professed himself to be, or his followers have credited him with being, the inspired mouthpiece of the Deity. There can be no doubt in the minds of candid students that each one of these religious teachers was perfectly honest, both as regards his conception of the character and importance of his doctrine and also the method by which he professed to receive them. Each believed that what he taught was ultimate and infallible truth, and was received directly from the Deity. It is evident, however, that from whatever source they were derived the doctrines could not all be ultimate truth, since they were not in harmony amongst themselves; but the authors of them all present their claim to inspiration, and whose claim to accept and whose to reject it is difficult to decide. But accepting the theory that each promulgated the doctrines, theological, cosmological, and ethical, that came to him automatically through the superior perception of the subliminal self, all the phenomena fall into line with the well ascertained action of that subliminal self. * * * That in either case an infinite Deity spoke the commonplace which is attributed to Him is incredible, but to suppose it all, both the grand and the trivial, the work of the subconscious self of the respective authors is in accordance with what we know of automatism and of the wonderful work of the subliminal self"—the Soul.

His last word is:—"The subliminal self acts sometimes while the primary self is fully conscious—better and most frequently in reverie, in dreams, in somnambulism, but best of all when the ordinary self is altogether subjective and the body silent, inactive, insensible. * * * Then still retaining its attenuated vital connection, it goes forth and sees with extended vision and gathers truth from a thousand various and hidden sources. Will it act less freely, less intelligently, with less consciousness and individuality when that attenuated vital connection is severed, and the body lies —untenanted?"

THE RELIGIOUS QUESTION IN CHINA.

> "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear "your words, when ye depart out of that house or "city, shake off the dust of your feet." *

It is very instructive for us to consider what might have been the result in China, especially in view of the recent upheaval, if the missionaries of the west had literally obeyed this command of the Founder of their religion, and had departed from the city of the Celestial Empire, shaking off the dust from their shoes as a testimony. We cannot doubt that, had this been done in 1860, when the allied armies, accomplishing their purpose, withdrew from Pekin, there would have been a saving of many devoted lives, and a great gain to the cause of peace and goodwill among men.

Be it understood that we do not wish to accuse the missionaries of wantonly stirring up strife and discord, nor even of a "zeal for religion, without wisdom;" we fully understand the motives which led to their militant campaign in China, and recognise their action as the natural outcome of these motives. The zeal for missionary enterprise seems to us to have this origin: A religious and spiritual awakening comes to a man or woman, when the immense power and nearness of the unseen forces of life, the substantial yet immaterial powers of the soul, are for the first time recognised, and an inner illumination, a glow of light and warmth, enkindles the whole heart and mind. The presence and power of these spiritual forces is the best approved fact in history and human life, though many varying explanations, many mythologies, even, have grown up about them. Yet no truth has better or more unanimous testimony than the second birth, the awakening of the soul.

The first glow of illumination gradually fades, perhaps from the waning of religious emotion, perhaps from the re-assertion of habitual life; and the awakened individual casts about for some means to restore the first radiance. No price is too great; no task too difficult; indeed, the very difficulty of the task is its charm, as promising the greater reward; and, with the beliefs and traditions

*Since writing this, I find that Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, has used this text with precisely the same application to missionary "zeal without wisdom" in China.

of the West, it is almost inevitable that the task should take the form of missionary enterprise, into which enter the excitements of foreign travel, and the splendid images of possible martyrdom.

We must add another causal element: the perfectly false and mythological notion of the East, and especially of the moral and religious condition of the East, which still fills the popular understanding. Just as it is certain that the tremendous intellectual and moral revolution which springs from Darwinism has as yet hardly scratched the surface of the popular mind, which still holds to the idea of special creation, if it holds any idea at all as to biological beginnings; so it is wholly certain that the general public, and especially that part of it which furnishes the sinews of war to the militant missionary, has no inkling of the tremendous change which has come over our knowledge of the East, during the past half-century, and especially over our knowledge of the East's religious and moral life.

Just as the episode of Joseph and his brethren, of Potiphar's wife and Pharaoh's dreams, supplies the substance of popular Egyptology while the book of Esther and the captivities furnish most of popular Assyriology, so surely do the general notions of China and India as fields of missionary-work, flow direct from the traditions of Prester John and Alph the sacred river, of Xanadu and the phoenix and the unicorn, of the gold-digging griffons and the anthropophagi and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders; the gorgeous tapestry of romance woven by medieval myth-makers like Sir John Mandeville, himself a myth.

We may say it without fear of contradiction, that the average supporter of missionary enterprise might find an abundant source of real knowledge in the Tales of Sindbad the Sailor, which spring from the golden age of Arabian exploration; while the Book of Ser Marco Polo the Venetian would be simply a revelation to them, and in the main a revelation entirely trustworthy, for details of Asian men and places.

This is the imaginary East which looms large before the minds of enthusiasts who, full of their new and very real spiritual awakening, and burning to perpetuate their first warm glow of emotion, determine to give up all, and devote their lives to spreading the light among the heathen. If we are right in our feeling of their

motive, it is open to this criticism, and a very grave criticism it is: that they are moved by a really selfish impulse; that their eyes are fixed on their own condition, and their desire to perpetuate it, and that they are not moved at all by any real knowledge of the moral condition of the "heathen," or any real sympathy for what are the "heathen's" true problems and sorrows in this vale of tears. They determine to "do good" to the "heathen" without any knowledge of what the "heathen" really needs, or any certainty that they can supply that need. It is anxiety for their own salvation, and not for his, which we find in the last analysis to be the true motive cause.

Be it remembered that we concede, and are firmly convinced of, the truth in the religion which the missionaries burn to spread; and further, that we recognize the reality and purely spiritual character of the inner awakening which sets their hearts in motion; nonetheless are we convinced that, in following the missionary impulse, and in the method in which they try to realise it, the proselytisers are moved by a subtle form of selfishness, and more, that in doing what they do, they are quite false to the central thought of the religion of Jesus.

Amongst the endless controversies of sects, and the endless interpretations and confusions of creeds, the One Commandment stands forth as the unshaken rock of the Galilean evangel; and without a quite thorough understanding of our neighbor—our Chinese neighbor, for a concrete case—and a thorough sympathy with his heart's aspirations and the sources of his moral and spiritual life, it is nonsense to talk of our fulfilling the One Commandment towards him, of "loving him as ourselves." This Commandment carries as its necessary condition precedent the duty of understanding, of sympathy, of putting ourselves intellectually and imaginatively in his place; and will the missionaries as a body pretend for a moment that each of them did this, before deciding to carry their message to the Chinese? If so, what a woeful failure they must have made of it, judging by the feelings they seem to have aroused in Chinese breasts.

It is impossible to enter imaginatively into the life of another, until we have in a large degree risen above our own personal bonds; it is impossible for us to enter into the intellectual life and the moral ideals of another, until we have overcome the hindrances of

our own ignorance and prejudice. Supposing that a would-be missionary, one touched with the new life of the soul, and burning to live in that life, were to have his attention turned to the Chinese, and, after mastering their languages and the enormously varied condition of their lives throughout the eighteen provinces, were to go further into the source of this life, the miraculous book of China's past, and reading there, were to come to a true understanding of the springs of Chinese religion, supposing that such a one, with real sympathy and understanding, were to discern that he could render to the Chinese some substantial moral and spiritual service, which they on their part would be willing and ready to receive, we should hold that such a one had really fulfilled the spirit of the One Commandment, in regard to his Chinese neighbor; but convinced of this, we are perfectly certain that whoever had the moral and intellectual power to do this,—and it is a duty which concerns no one who has not the power to fulfill it,—would see, long before his researches were completed, that there were a thousand tasks for him at home, a thousand far more crying needs, a thousand far more poignant evils waiting at his very door to be righted, and that he would willingly set his hand to these. Further that his studies would in no sense have been lost or wasted, for he would have broadened his heart and mind, especially in the vital direction of imagining himself into the lives of others, and that the power thus gained would serve him on every hand in his tasks at home. Lastly, he would have laid a far more certain foundation for his spiritual life, and for the continuation of that high enthusiasm which moved him at the outset, than can ever come from a rash and ill-considered invasion of foreign lands, and a harsh and ignorant condemnation of foreign ways and ideals.

We are, therefore, entirely convinced that a literal fulfillment of the Master's command, quoted by us at the outset, and taken as applying to China, would have been vastly more beneficial than the continuance of Christian missions, and more, we are persuaded that this would have been vastly better Christianity, a course of action far more in harmony with the ideals of the Founder of Christianity, and the One Commandment which he himself set as the head and heart of his teaching.

II.

Suppose that the case we have imaginatively conjured up, had been actually realised: suppose that a young enthusiast, touched with the awakening light of the soul, had determined to understand, before acting; and that, having been drawn for some reason towards the Chinese, he had determined to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the material of their spiritual life before deciding to teach them, what would he have found?

He would have found that the true spiritual life of the Chinese was founded on a religion very like his own; or, to be more accurate, he would find in China a series of Scriptures closely analogous to the Old and New Testaments; for we must all recognise that there is very much in our religion, especially in that popular religion to which missionary enterprise appeals, which is an outgrowth, and aftergrowth of the Bible, and for which, in the Bible, we should find very doubtful warrantry. Let us say there are three hundred Christian sects,—in reality, there are far more,—we shall find that each one of these affirms that there is insufficient Scripture warrant for the form of all the others, and we shall thus have an overwhelming majority against any one. Let us add, further, that the Sacred Scriptures are by no means precisely the same thing as the popular understanding of the Sacred Scriptures.

But if our enthusiastic student were to turn to the religious life of China with a duly critical and enlightened sense of the mutual relations of his own Sacred Books, he would find that, rightly viewed, those of China are not greatly different in scope, while in the spiritual essence of their message, they are not different at all. He would find, first, among the Five Classics, as they are called, a very close analogy to the Old Testament Books; he would find, in the Books of Chinese Buddhism, a story of a divine mission, five centuries older than the story of the Gospels, yet very like it: an angelic Annunciation, an Incarnation, following on an Immaculate Conception; a miraculous childhood, a Temptation in the Wilderness, a Summoning of the Disciples; Parables in the Garden, and, finally, a living for humanity, instead of a death for humanity,—a not less real and even more difficult sacrifice.

If, again, our student were to study the wonderful sentences of Lao-Tsze, he would find a counterpart of the thought of Paul, that

metaphysician and mystic among the Apostles; and in the Way of the Tao he would learn to see that very Way which, for the author of the Acts, was the synonym of the new Evangel.

But he would find more than this. Taking a large and broad view of life, and having due regard to the special condition of China, he would find that, as a direct result and expression of the spiritual life flowing from these Oriental Scriptures, there is far more generally and uniformly distributed peace and good-will towards men in China than there is in Europe. He would find, in the words of a celebrated missionary, who actually did follow the course we have sketched, who actually did live himself into the spiritual life, and think himself into the thoughts of his Chinese neighbor, that in China the mass of the people "enjoys personal liberty, lightness of taxation, and freedom from offensive police supervision, such as are enjoyed by no people in Europe."

Turning from the social to the intellectual and moral side of Chinese life, he would learn to say, with the same enlightened critic: "In language more pithy and as expressive as that of the best Western philosophers, in phrases shining with the warmth of lively imaginations, in tropes and figures unsurprassed for beauty of expression, for correctness of diction, for appositeness of illustration, for elevation of sentiment,—the Chinese philosophers have been for more than two thousand years inculcating the precepts of a pure and noble morality. And all the mental toil displayed in their curt aphoristic sayings is for the purpose of illustrating illustrious virtue; and all the intellectual labor of their swelling periods is devoted to enforcing the performance of man's duty to man."

"Man's duty to man," in the opinion of the wisest and greatest of the Chinese thinkers, is to deal with his neighbor as he would have his neighbor deal with him; that very Golden Rule, that One Commandment which is the one thing indisputable in the Christian religion. Finding all this, our lover of things Oriental would have learned, as the famous missionary and historian of the Manchus whom we have quoted did learn, that: "We might sometimes question the infallibility of our own wisdom!"

III.

We are often, even habitually told, that the Chinese have no

religion. I can imagine a disinterested observer not of our own protestations, but of our acts, of our habitual lives, saying the very same thing of us. Therefore we must give the other side due weight, when we come to study China. If we do this, we shall find, first, that so far from having no religion, China is saturated with religion, and that this religion, going back to the very dawn of her national life, is in essence identical with our own.

We are told, even by those who admit the moral and social system of the Chinese to possess a certain excellence, that China has a religion, indeed, but a religion of this world only, rather a Socialism than a Faith; something not incompatible with practical and speculative atheism, and with entire materialism and disbelief in man's soul and immortality. And it is a curious illustration of our human frailty that the very people who tell us this, will in the next breath accuse the Chinese of idolatry, because they pay reverence to the spirits of their dead!

There is nothing like the fine logic of fact in dealing with generalities of criticism and condemnation; and there is nothing like appealing to the great Originals, when you wish to be certain of your facts. Therefore, in order to see how this matter of China's religion really stands, let us turn to her Sacred Scriptures, and first of all to the most national part of them,the Five Classics which are the heart of the great system of Confucius.

Confucius, living some two thousand five hundred years ago, and therefore almost exactly contemporary with two other great teachers, the Buddha of Kapilavastu and Pythagoras of Samos, did not in truth found the system which bears his name, nor did he claim to do so. He is closely to be compared with his contemporary in the religious history of Palestine: Ezra, the Restorer of the Law. Confucius constantly referred to "the Illustrious Ancients" for his doctrine, and, if we would come at the heart of it, we had better do the same.

The Shu King, chief of the Five Classics, is a Book of History. It closely corresponds to the narrative part of the Pentateuch, and goes back in fact to a period four thousand three hundred years ago, just the time to which the patriarch Abraham is assigned by Jewish tradition. The Li Chi, another of the Five Classics, is a Record of Rites, and fairly comparable to Leviticus

and Deuteronomy. The Shih King may be likened to the Poetical Books of the Bible. And to the later Historical Books we may compare the Annals of the Chun Chiu, which come from the hand of Confucius himself. The Yi King, the "Book of Changes," and the Hsiao King, the "Book of Filial Piety," may be ranged against the remaining Prophetical Books, with their double elements, part mysterious like the visions of Daniel and Ezekiel, and part hortatory, like the teachings of Isaiah or Jeremiah. We shall not, of course, find the same poignant and piercing emotion in the Chinese books, but neither shall we find the passionate elements which free-thinkers have so often condemned in the Old Testament.

Let us pay the chiefest attention to the Shu King, the Book of History, which is the true key to Chinese national life. As we study its venerable pages, which have seen so many centuries and milleniums wax and wane, we shall be struck first and most forcibly by the profoundly religious tone in which the national life of China is conceived. "Be reverent! Be reverent!" is the constantly repeated injunction, to the Emperors and Kings, and from them to their Ministers and powerful vassals. Reverence is the thread on which all the rest is strung. In the Canon of the Emperor Shun, one of the oldest parts of that old Scripture, we read that: "He sacrificed specially, but with the recognised forms, to God; sacrificed with reverent purity to the Six Honored Ones; offered their appropriate sacrifices to the hills and rivers, and extended his worship to the host of spirits." This very first quotation shows a belief in the Divine, and in immortality. As to the worship of the hills and streams, it is an expression of that pantheism which fills the poetry of Shelley, of Wordsworth, of Emerson. In the saying of the sage Laotsze: "Man takes his law from Earth; Earth takes its law from Heaven; Heaven takes its law from the Soul." We find the veneration of ancestors at the very outset, that is, the belief in their souls' survival. For the ancient Emperor "presented a burnt offering to Heaven, and sacrificed a single bull in the temple of the Illustrious Ancestor." "Let me be reverent! Let me be reverent!" cried the old ruler of China, "let compassion rule in punishment."

Again in the very oldest parts of the Shu King, dating from a thousand years before the Fall of Troy, we find this ideal:

"Pride brings loss, and humility receives increase; this is the way to Heaven.

"Be kind to the distant, give honor to the virtuous, and your confidence to the good.

"Morning and night be reverent, be upright, be pure.

"Teach our sons, so that the straight-forward shall yet be mild; the gentle, dignified; the strong, not tyrannical; and the impetuous not arrogant.

"To obtain the views of all; to give up one's own opinion, and follow that of others; to keep from oppressing the helpless, and not to neglect the straitened and poor."

Or again, we find, in the Counsels of the Great Yu, this moral Decalogue:

"Admonish yourself to caution, when there seems no cause for anxiety.

"Do not fail to observe the laws and ordinances.

"Do not find your enjoyment in idleness.

"Do not go to excess in pleasure.

"In your employment of men of worth, let none come between you and them.

"Put away evil without hesitation.

"Do not carry out plans of the wisdom of which you have doubts.

"Study that all your purposes may be with the light of reason.

"Do not go against what is right, to get the praise of the people.

"Do not oppose the people's wishes to follow your own desires."

Here is a somewhat similar list of the Nine Virtues, from another Chinese Book of Counsels: The Nine Virtues are:

"Affability combined with dignity; mildness combined with firmness; bluntness combined with respectfulness; aptness for government combined with reverent caution; docility combined with boldness; straightforwardness combined with gentleness; an easy negligence combined with discrimination; boldness combined with sincerity; valor combined with righteousness." With this high morality, we have that raising of tone which lifts us into the region of religion: "Heaven distinguishes the virtuous; Heaven punishes the guilty. How reverent ought the Masters of territories to be!"

Let us remember that the ancestors of the Germanic and

Anglo-Saxon nations were destined, in the wisdom of that same Heaven, to paint their savage bodies with blue woad, and to use stone or bronze hatchets, for well nigh two thousand years after these wise words were written in China, not by mere theorists and pedants, but written by kings for kings, on whose fidelity to them depended their tenure of the throne.

We read in the Announcement of Thang, who died in the year which saw the marriage of Jacob, that: "To reverence and honor the path prescribed by Heaven is the way ever to preserve the favoring appointment of Heaven." If we enquire how the way of Heaven is to be found we shall receive this answer: "The great God has conferred even on the inferior people a moral sense, compliance with which would lead their nature invariably right." Again, the king says: "The good in you, I will not dare to keep concealed; and for the evil in me, I will not dare to forgive myself. I will examine these things in harmony with the mind of God."

In a tract of about the same age, it is declared that: "The ways of God are not invariable:—on the good-doer he sends down all blessings, and on the evil-doer he sends all miseries." The same sentiment is echoed in the Book of the Possession of Pure Virtue, some three thousand six hundred years old: "Good and evil do not wrongfully befall men, but Heaven sends down misery or happiness according to their conduct." And this splendid charge to the Ministers and Officials: "Let none of you dare to suppress the remonstrances of the poor!"

A century or two later occurs a text which sheds great light on the vexed question of Ancestor-worship, showing that even three of four thousand years ago it was based, not on any social or formal convention, but on the belief in present immortality: "I think of my ancestors, who are now the spiritual sovereigns.....Were I to err in my government and remain long here, my high sovereign —the founder of our dynasty—would send down on me great punishment for my crime, and say: Why do you oppress my people?"

In tracts a little later, say the time of the Judges, we find it declared that: "Heaven is all-intelligent and observing. In its inspection of men, Heaven's first consideration is of their righteousness, and it bestows on them accordingly length of years or the contrary."

Again, is there not something very familiar, and full of the true ideal of Democracy, in this: "What the people desire, Heaven will be found to give effect to. Heaven sees as my people see; Heaven hears as my people hear." Is not this the essence of religion: "The people have been produced by Supreme Heaven, and both body and soul are Heaven's gift."

This is suggestive of Epictetus, though preceding him by a millenium: of the five Sources of Happiness, it is said: "The first is long life; the second, riches; the third, soundness of body and serenity of mind; the fourth, the love of virtue; and the fifth, fulfilling to the end the will of Heaven."

Prayer and divine government of the world inspire these verses: "When he is all devoted to the virtue of reverence, he may pray to heaven for a long-abiding decree in his favor." And this, from the Book of Officers: "I have heard the saying, 'God leads men to tranquil security,' but the sovereign of Hsia would not move to such security, whereupon God sent down corrections, indicating His mind to him. He, however, would not be warned by God, but proceeded to greater disoluteness and sloth and excuses for himself. Then Heaven no longer regarded nor heard him, but disallowed his great appointment, and inflicted extreme punishment. Then it charged your founder, Thang the Successful, to set Hsia aside, and by means of able men to rule the kingdom. From Thang the Successful down to Emperor Yi, every sovereign sought to make his virtue illustrious, and duly attended to the sacrifices. And thus it was that, while Heaven exterted a great establishing influence, preserving and regulating the House of Yu, its sovereigns on their part were humbly careful not to lose God, and strove to manifest a good-doing corresponding to that of Heaven. But in those times, their successor showed himself greatly ignorant of the ways of Heaven, and much less could it be expected of him that he would be regardful of the earnest labors of his fathers for the country. Greatly abandoned to dissolute idleness, he gave no thought to the bright principles of Heaven, and the awfulness of the people. On this account God no longer protected him, but sent down the great ruin which we have witnessed. Heaven was not with him, because he did not make his virtue illustrious."

IV.

These quotations, all taken from that one great Scripture, the

Shu King, the most venerable among the Sacred Books of China, are amply sufficient to show what the spirit of the Chinese religion really is. I have avoided quoting from the poetical books gathered in the Shih King, from the treatise of Filial Piety of Confucius, or from the more spiritual and mystic doctrine of Lao-Tsze, because, after all, the Shu King is pre-eminently the foundation-stone of the whole edifice. It is universally accepted and admitted; it is the heart of that Confucianism which is the heart of China.

And these quotations have amply shown a perfect faith in God, a clear recognition of our duty to Him, and the voice of conscience, a certain apprehension of God as the intelligent and immediate ruler of this our life, rewarding the righteous and punishing the guilty, an unquestioning certainty of the soul's immortality, and lastly, a profound recognition of our duty towards our neighbor, as in that striking phrase: "the awfulness (sanctity) of the people." There is, too, a very democratic sense that the Voice of the People is the Voice of God, as when it is declared that God hears with the ears of the people, and this sense of popular rights, going back to the dim gray dawn of China's past, has ever been the foundation and touchstone of her government. Dynasty has followed dynasty for nearly five thousand years; whenever a dynasty fell, it was clearly recognised that this was the judgment of Heaven, avenging the wrongs of the people, and the neglect of the ancient Law of Righteousness.

I have quoted only the Book of History, from a conviction that the directness and dry lucidity of its style will best convince the understanding; but many things might be drawn from the more poetical or mystical books, to appeal with equal force to the emotions. Take as a single instance this Prayer from the Shih King:

"Let me be reverent! Let me be reverent! The way of Heaven is clear. And its appointment is not easily preserved. Let me not say that it is high aloft above me. It ascends and descends about our doings, it daily inspects us wherever we are.

"I am a little child without intelligence to be reverently attentive to my duties; but by daily progress and monthly advance, I will learn to hold fast the gleams of knowledge, till I arrive at bright intelligence. Assist me to bear the burden of my position, and show me how to display virtuous conduct!"

Finally this, as a warning in the present juncture, from the Master Lao-tsze:

"There is always One who presides over the infliction of death. He who would inflict death in the room of Him, who so presides, may be described as hewing wood instead of the carpenter. Seldom is it that he who undertakes the hewing instead of the carpenter, does not cut his own hands."

TO ALL OUR CONTRIBUTORS

IN THE SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL SENSE

Greeting!

"THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM" recently published a Notice, addressed to the authors of many unwritten articles, among its readers, praying them to get the said articles written down and sent to us. This request brought such good results, in the form of certain excellent contributions by quite new writers, that we are impelled to repeat our invitation. Good friends, no longer hide your talents in the napkin of the unmanifested, but precipitate them on paper, and give them to waiting humanity, through our pages. Be encouraged to tread in the path of the Sages who have gone before you! Let your inward revelations take body in the written word! Modesty is a beautiful virtue; so also is courage. Show that you are wise, by letting this word suffice.

Now to address our contributors in the material sense: "THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM" with every year grows firmer on its foundation, more able to stand alone. Its independent life grows and developes. A new milestone in its journey is passed, with this number. From henceforth, all subscriptions and donations are to be sent *to the Editor direct,* and no longer to four or five different addresses, in different cities. We hope soon to bring all subscriptions up to date, and, where subscribers have sent their contributions in the middle of a volume, we hope to send them notices asking for a supplementary subscription to carry their subscription forward to the beginning of a new volume. There are a good many among our readers whose subscriptions, like the articles alluded to above, still dwell in the unmanifested; these we shall ask to precipitate, to materialise. To all and sundry, we make the request that contributions, subscriptions, communications and sendings of whatever nature may in future be addressed to us direct; money being remitted by postal orders, payable to

The Editor,
THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM,
Flushing, N. Y.

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AMERICA.

Founded by H. P. BLAVATSKY at New York in 1875.

The Society does not pretend to be able to establish at once a universal brotherhood among men, but only strives to create the nucleus of such a body. Many of its members believe that an acquaintance with the world's religions and philosophies will reveal, as the common and fundamental principle underlying these, that "spiritual identity of all Souls with the Oversoul" which is the basis of true brotherhood; and many of them also believe that an appreciation of the finer forces of nature and man will still further emphasize the same idea.

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The following proclamation was adopted at the Convention of the Society held at Boston, April, 1895:

"The Theosophical Society in America by its delegates and members in Convention assembled, does hereby proclaim fraternal good will and kindly feeling toward all students of Theosophy and members of Theosophical Societies wherever and however situated. It further proclaims and avers its hearty sympathy and association with such persons and organizations in all theosophical matters except those of government and administration, and invites their correspondence and co-operation.

"To all men and women of whatever caste, creed, race, or religious belief, who aim at the fostering of peace, gentleness, and unselfish regard one for another, and the acquisition of such knowledge of men and nature as shall tend to the elevation and advancement of the human race, it sends most friendly greeting and freely proffers its services.

"It joins hands with all religions and religious bodies whose efforts are directed to the purification of men's thoughts and the bettering of their ways, and it avows its harmony therewith. To all scientific societies and individual searchers after wisdom upon whatever plane and by whatever righteous means pursued, it is and will be grateful for such discovery and unfoldment of Truth as shall serve to announce and confirm a *scientific basis for ethics.*

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